DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 444 581 IR 020 237

AUTHOR Watson, Kenneth L.
TITLE The InfoTective: Evaluating an On-Line Curriculum Framework.
PUB DATE 2000-00-00
NOTE 8p.; In: Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference: Proceedings of SITE 2000 (11th, San Diego, California, February 8-12, 2000). Volumes 1-3; see IR 020 112.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; *Civil War (United States); *Computer Uses in Education; Curriculum Development; Educational Technology; High Schools; *History Instruction; *Instructional Design; Primary Sources; Qualitative Research; *World Wide Web
IDENTIFIERS Technology Integration; *Web Sites

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the findings from a qualitative case study evaluating an online curriculum framework for high school students. This framework integrates content, context, and technology with primary documents for the "Valley of the Shadow" Civil War Web site. Data were collected through interviews with selected students and the teacher, the students' and teacher's reflective journals, student reports, in-class observation supported by research notes, and evidence of participation in activities. An emergent design was used to analyze the observational and reflective journal data. Findings indicate that students were highly engaged in the activity and obtained a deeper understanding of American Civil War history though a designed reading, writing, and concept mapping instructional activity. Contains 13 references. (MES)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

G.E. Marks

The InfoTective: Evaluating an On–Line Curriculum Framework

Kenneth L. Watson

University of Virginia Curry School of Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Charlottesville, VA USA

klw7f@virginia.edu

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Abstract: This paper is a report on the findings from a qualitative case study evaluating an on-line curriculum framework. This framework integrates content, context, and technology with primary documents from the "Valley of the Shadow" civil war website. An emergent design was used to analyze the observational and reflective journal data. Findings indicate that students were highly engaged in the activity and obtained a deeper understanding of American Civil War history through a designed reading, writing, and concept mapping instructional activity.

Introduction There is a nationwide call for the use of technology in the classroom setting and technology literacy. Teachers are inundated with requests from school boards, parents and students to incorporate the Internet and technology into their classes. The teacher-centered social studies classroom needs to move away from the indoctrination, transmittal mode and move towards the more interdisciplinary and constructivist framework of the learner-centered classroom. (Frederick, 1991; Atwater 1991). Frederick discusses historian Henry Adams' disillusionment with the educational system and with his own teaching. He suggests improving history instruction by involving students more actively in learning and proposes incorporating interactive learning strategies, including (1) interactive lectures; (2) questioning; (3) small groups; (4) critical thinking and problem solving; (5) debates and role playing; and (6) affective learning through media. (Frederick, 1991, 67-83; Hilligoss,1992). The on–line curricular approach equips students with this ownership. Through the use of the InfoTective framework students will use the Internet to study newspapers, letters, diaries, photographs and improve critical thinking skills (Gottesman, 1990; Junn, (1989). Additionally studies have revealed that student participation in active newsgathering and interpretation will enable them to recognize news bias and emotional appeal (Benenson, 1991). Students can become learners through conversations, research, writing, and grappling with data on the Internet. These critical thinking and decision-making skills can outfit the student of today with the necessary tools for competing in the 21st century.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the merits of an on–line curriculum framework in a social studies classroom. The study explored how students in a high school U.S. Civil War History elective course benefit from the use of an on–line curriculum framework, in this case the retrieval of primary documents via the Internet for reading, discussing, and analyzing its contents.

The Internet in the Classroom Technology tools such as the Internet, if used properly, have opened a window of fresh educational opportunity, and if this opportunity is missed then it can easily become a Pandora's box. Ron Wheeler in the article, *Rx for Social Studies* maintains that the explosion of information and teaching resources (multimedia, audio–visual, computer networks) represents a mixed blessing. He argues that the proliferation of information access necessitates students learning critical and evaluative skills. Furthermore, Gerald Marker in *Social Studies and the Internet: Developing a School Policy*, asserts that while some students will become Internet "fanatics" most will never tap the enormous power of the Internet without a coordinated system of instruction. " For me the most powerful aspect of my study was to examine how using the Internet within an on–line curriculum framework, where access to information is a critical component to the course content, affects the student's learning experience. The InfoTective, an on–line curriculum framework, prompts the student to grapple with primary documents through a variety of instructional methods. This InfoTective activity employs (1) cooperative learning strategies; (2) explicit instructions; (3) tutoring/coaching; (4) modeling; (5) student responsibility/ control; and (6) equity of access to information (Fontana, 1990). This study affords the opportunity to investigate how a web-based curriculum and documents affect the student's understanding of historical events and how do they perform within this environment.

What is an InfoTective? "InfoTective is a term designed for education in an Age of Information. In the smokestack school, teachers imparted meanings for students to digest, memorize and regurgitate. In Information Age schools, students make the meaning. They puzzle their way through piles of (bytes) and fragments, sorting, sifting, weighing and arranging them until a picture emerges"(McKenzie, 1993). In this case the term InfoTective is used to describe a curriculum framework and activity that introduces the student to various methods of instruction to be used while conducting their research of primary documents on the world wide web. This online curriculum framework adopts the integrative model as an inductive strategy and "is designed to help students develop deep understanding of organized bodies of knowledge, while at the same time practice higher order thinking about information they're studying"(Eggen, 1996). According to Eggen,

ED 444 581

IR020237

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"the Integrative Model as with the Inductive Model, views learners as actively constructing their own understanding of the topics they study…While the Inductive Model is designed to teach specific topics in the form of concepts, generalizations, principles, and academic rules, the Integrative Model is designed to teach combinations of those specific forms of content in large, organized bodies of information".(1996, p. 35)

Recognizing that the framework that I have developed is far from perfect, I tried to develop and present this curriculum framework in a fashion that utilizes these curriculum models with the Internet and the analysis of primary documents. InfoTective activities encourage the student to become more critical when they encounter information or resources housed on the various web sites. In this cyberworld, interdisciplinary learning approaches are a necessity in order to stimulate students to understand the context as well as the content of historical events. When they are able to understand the sociological and cultural contexts of history then they will experience even greater motivation to participate in the activity. The student will gradually progress to more independent document searches within a predetermined website and ultimately synthesize all researched information using several writing strategies, discussion groups, concept mapping and a final presentation.

In this InfoTective activity about the Civil War the student assumes the role of a CyberHistorian. The CyberHistorian is a student who surfs the web rediscovering pivotal moments in history. The Cyberhistorian's mission is to use the web to explore the principle of connections and to witness history's presence and effects on the present day. After a thorough examination of a variety of sociological, political, and cultural perspectives, the CyberHistorian will construct and personalize history. By way of this analysis of a microcosmic event the CyberHistorian will rediscover and experience history on the web.

The InfoTective Activity When instruction is based on primary documents and a student's ability to understand history by way of primary source documents there has been a qualitative difference in the way they thought about the past (Blake, 1981). The question is how to involve children most effectively in making the connections between their developing time concepts and historical understanding"(Downey, Levstik, 1990). The ability to use primary sources to substantiate argumentation and to improve critical thinking has been suggested as necessary by a variety of curriculum standards or frameworks. Not only does the well written narrative provide an understanding of historical cause and effect relationships, and some domain specific knowledge, yet more importantly, it "contextualizes history and presents it as a human construction open to interpretation"(Iser, 1978). Each component of the InfoTective was meant to bring the student closer to the historical event by witnessing and experiencing this event through the eyes of those who lived in that time.

The Valley of the Shadow

The InfoTective activity in this study uses the Valley of the Shadow primary document web–site as its database. Through a series of instructional steps the student will employ narratives, opposing accounts, artistic works and compare images. With the rapid increase of primary documents accessed through the Internet, the InfoTective seems aptly perched for multiple levels of classroom application.

Study Focus Do student's gain new understandings about the issues of this war and how they affected the lives of the people? Would they understand the connections between the citizens of the valley society and the national government, the interrelationships among all citizens? I began this study wanting to determine the student's computer literacy and learning orientation. I perceived this as the first step that a teacher may want to take in order to prepare for the facilitation of an activity in the computer lab. The learning orientation survey was used to determine the student's academic orientation. This information allowed me to assign students to group according to learning styles, levels of independent learning, leadership, the ability to work within groups and stay on task while conducting research.

Description of Method Because of the exploratory and complex nature of the present inquiry, I used a case study methodology employing multiple methods of data collection (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990; Yin, 1984; Merriam, 1998). The strength of the case study approach was emphasized so as to promote an understanding of this unexamined approach to social studies technology education and to raise questions for further research. The targeted school for this study is a public high school located in Albemarle County in a very heterogeneous neighborhood. The school has a traditional configuration of grades nine through twelve. The study took place in a secondary school where the students are familiar with using the Internet in a social studies classroom and teacher who has incorporated Internet activities and used primary sources documents in the curriculum. For the purposes of this investigation, an American Civil War elective course was studied intensively. *Data Collection.* The data for this case study was obtained over a 2 1/2 week period from: (a) interviews with selected students and the teacher, (b) the students' and teacher's reflective journals; (c) student reports; (d) in-class observations supported by researcher notes; (e) evidence of participation in activities (cf., Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Yin, 1994). The study focused on the actions and interactions of two groups of 4 students as they proceed through the InfoTective activities. The InfoTective topic for the treatment groups are titled "Women in the Valley" and "New Political Parties" (NPP). All activities were held in the computer lab with the final discussions and presentations in the traditional classroom setting. The teacher was trained to be the primary facilitator for the activities. The students received traditional classroom instruction in the content area from the teacher of record. I met with the students and gave them an overview of this project and took them on a tour through the site. I described to the students the activities to be used and how they support their course curriculum. *Data Analysis* In the study of this treatment I am open to allowing the events to reveal what actually happens when the Internet is used in a social studies course and how an online framework of this type assists the usage of the Internet. I used an emergent design as the basic method for data analysis.

Results and Discussions Since this case evolved over a period of 2 1/2 weeks in which data was collected as the participants completed each level of the InfoTective activities, I will present the data in sections which represent these levels and discuss the results and implications for each level. I believe that this will provide an opportunity to not only evaluate the entire InfoTective curriculum framework but also investigate the strengths and weaknesses of its parts. Each level will therefore be a "real time" narrative of the events as they occurred then it will be followed by a sections on the implications and recommendations for teachers using this activity and others like it.

Level 1 Information Gathering. The students will choose newspaper accounts from each county and choose one letter or diary as your data source. They will write 1 brief editorial for the pro-abolitionists newspaper and 1 for the anti-abolitionist newspaper. Step 3: Information Sharing: After you have completed the editorial writing activity, cut and paste the text portion of your report into the correct location in the InfoTective on line discussion board. **Level 2** Step 1: Information Gathering: Use the Newspaper and Documents worksheet to read along with all documents. Step 2: Choose one of the letters or diary to read. Step 3: Use the concept map to compare and contrast the data from Franklin and Augusta counties and fill in the respective areas **Level 3** In Level 3 the InfoTectives must pull together and grapple with all of the data and information they uncovered. The InfoTectives will answer essay questions. **Level 4** Reassemble into your groups and write a group essay based on each member's essay. Organize final presentations. **Level 5** Visualize the roles played by the people in this civil war society as that of a family members. Use concept mapping to look for the causes, effects, and interrelationships with regard to the lives of the people in Valley society. **Level 6 Teacher Led Closure Activity** The teacher should use the Matrix provided and lead the class discussions for all InfoTectives assignments.

Observations and Discussion Day One Activity- Although this first day is hectic, I made myself available to the teacher and students for any questions in order to get things started. *Tips:*

- Make sure that all worksheets are stapled and ready.
- Do not rush.
- Write all instructions in a visible location.
- Make sure that all students under stand what they are doing and where are going.
- Read it again all instruction for all of the assignment.
- And be prepared for multiple questions.
- Remind the students to read directions in their entirety!!

When I walked into the classroom the students were ready to go. The teacher had prepared them for the activities. I quickly called all names and placed in into eight groups there were only three groups of four. Most of the students were a little excited. The had obviously, worked in the computer lab often. I was impressed by the number of students who were accustomed to working on the Internet, their keyboarding skills, and basic computer skills were excellent. The group that I am watching the group named, " Women in the Valley", had an interesting compilation. They comprised of one African-American female, two white-American males, and one foreign exchange male student. Initially, the female worked quietly by herself. Later I noticed that they began to break off into pairs. The second group under observation was the "New Political Parties" (NPP) group that consisted of four white-American males. Immediately they worked well together. Unknown to me at that time of the group's organization that two of the students had another course together and they also knew one another out side of school. At the end of the first day there were three kinds of questions from the students that stood out; they were computer operations, document reading, logistical questions, (e.g. Why did my computer shut down? How can I find the author for this article? Can I use this work sheet for all of the reading? Do we have to read all of the articles or just one? Read all instructions before you start clicking? As the student finished the first day, the teacher, Mr. Riddick had some good ideas.

- He closed the sessions by requesting that all of the students return to their same seats on tomorrow.
- Bookmark your web sites
- Start from their respective subject area pages.
- Creating a group discussion table outside of the lab.
- **Recommendations for the next day.** Students must reread instructions. Although there were few problems there remains that phenomena of just clicking on the highlighted areas.

Day 2 The class began immediately. Most of the students came in early and were ready to go. That was a nice feeling. The teacher was the real facilitator today. He actually took over the instruction that allowed me to take more detailed observations. There were a few questions, mainly regarding the availability of worksheets. Again today, the students in the focus group worked diligently on completing their readings for Level One "Women in the Valley". The female in the group worked quietly and alone. One note: She seems to be the emerging leader, the one who the guys listen to and take lead from. Andrew asked Amanda, "Who writes the best in this group", she replied well I write very small so that I can get all of this information onto the worksheet. They also began to strategize about how they would approach the writing of the editorial section. Some of the students were goofing off today. The teacher came to me and commented that "this particular group of guys are just plain difficult". We attempted to spread out the academic levels in our group selections, however it didn't set up perfectly. Amanda had a good question, " How can I interpret this article about taxation and no voting rights for women? I think there was a little old language in the article that needed a bit of translation. The teacher and I conversed about the approaches to moving the activity along. We both commented on the need for built in flexibility in the activity. In other words, we decided to halt everyone and assess where they are in the

2328

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

reading and then describe to them what is coming next. At this time only two groups are near completing their level 1 step 1, sections. The "Women in the Valley" group is one of them. At the end of the class, the teacher and I spoke about some of the issues regarding computer lab work. He said that some students either because of academic levels or disinterest are less willing to participate in these types of assignments, "It does not matter how brief the assignments are or how detailed the instructions maybe".

Tips:

- Extra worksheets available-prepared!
- Ask students to read all instructions before they click onto the sites. Make note of document page number, so that they will go to the right section of the page. Teachers ready for facilitator role. Teacher must read and be prepared for questions about topic, instructions, and flexible plans in case too much time is being spent on one task!
- The students have really taken to this task, and assignments. Once started minimal direct instruction is needed.

Highlight of the day. Very few questions! Most of the students were on task and moving along! *Day Three* The teacher, Mr. Riddick was very comfortable with the students in the computer lab. He was quite exemplary in his ability to explain and demonstrate to the students everything that the students needed to do for today. Class began promptly at 12:50pm. Teacher organized and settled the class. He facilitated the activity, and everyone started. He told them that they had 15 minutes to complete their editorials. This really got them moving. (I think that the time constraints really help) There were 8 students who entered the class at least 5 minutes early and went right to the web site and started working on their assignments. This was so impressive. They were completing their homework assignments, and preparing to do the group editorial statement. The Groups under study was ready and prepared to finish the next step of Level 1. Amanda came to class about five minutes late. However, her group members were ready and took up the slack. This group had started this assignment yesterday before class ended. The second group began to pick up speed and I watched formulate a game plan for completing their activities on time, (very exciting). Mr. Riddick, commented, "that there was a group of boys who are not usually this motivated, in fact one guy has been doing a bang up job, very thorough work." Several of the students have been responding and greeting me with eager ready to learn attitudes…

Tips:

- Bookmark pages so that student can pick up from where they left off, the next day.
- Be prepared to show cut and paste to some students.
- Instruct carefully to discussion board; make sure that all required entries are in place.

Highlights:

- Students demonstrated remarkable technology skills.
- Good feeling in the room, everyone was working, with the exception of one or two.
- There was a strong sense of accomplishment from the students.

Day Four Amazing start to class 7 students came to class early, during the student break period to begin their assignments. They wanted to either finish part of yesterday's assignment or begin today's tasks. The Teacher calls the class to attention. He outlines on the chalkboard the remaining schedule of activities for next week. He commented on the presentation preparations and the expectations for each task. He also, showed the class their discussion group string and responses. A small group of the students struggled with the reflective journals. The teacher commented to me that they questions were too long. Group 1 "Women in the Valley" is well ahead of everyone. Group two had few questions about there responsibilities and seemed to work well together. Group1 - Amanda and John strategize their approaches to finishing the level 2 task. They take the lead and divide the group and assign everyone to read 1 new article. The teacher is regularly moving about the room, monitoring the work and answering questions. In this activity teacher movement about the room in order to facilitate the assignment seem important. It keeps the students moving forward by monitoring the activity, gives guidance and assistance, further the opportunity to bond with the students via casual conversation. I noticed the teacher having a small discussion about tonight's football game with a couple of the athletes in the class. Teacher comments to me, **"I should have spent more time teaching the about the importance of primary documents and how the fit within the history curriculum."** He realizes that some of the students don't quite understand the significance of documents like these. Teacher decides to appoint a team captain for each of the groups. It did not happen naturally for all groups. Group 1, had a team captain to naturally evolve, because the guys looked to the girl for leadership. Another suggestion from the teacher was list the schedule of the day's activities on the chalkboard daily.

Tips:

- Provide a Worksheet and Instructional Packet for the entire activity.
- Prepare students for reading primary source documents.
- Short teachers may need a stepladder in order to maintain a oversight advantage when making important announcements.
- Designate a Team Captain for each group.

Day 5 Wow, Another day with 9 students coming into class early to either finish or start today's project. All four of Group 2's members are present and working well. They are the most efficient and hardworking group that I have seen. Group 1 also works well together, however they require more prompting from the team leader Amanda. She has really been a leader, very much the first person to go to with the questions regarding the schedule and what to do next. Group 2 on the other hand has a strong composition of independent and naturally motivated students. They work, then come

together for discussions, and then work again. Overall the class is very enthusiastic. Today's class is very settled feeling. They have become familiar with the activity and there are no feelings of confusion or doubt!
I hear students in the background strategizing, Saying, " I'll take Franklin county and you take Augusta". They have decided their responsibilities and have become sub-category experts. Group 1, Amanda, says they are finished, "What do we do next?" The teacher tells them, "Fill in the group chart, and then to begin your journal entries".
Tips:

- Design a manual for the students and one for the Teacher, this will give them more of a sense of mission and a preformatted workbook. Set up tabs by Levels, include Rubric, cover page, and final presentation checklist.
- Divide students into groups as we have, and make sure that they are equally distributed varying academic level. We have noticed that most of the groups are working well together, however, some of the students do not like their topics and wanted other topics.
- Devote more time to group work before this activity so that students are comfortable working with groups. The manuals will also provide them with a more directed sense of purpose.

Highlights:

- Overall great day. Students worked well. Little direction and oversight needed from teacher. They were really working independently, ands effectively!
- Today the students spent much less time reading instructions, not only because the directions were more straightforward, I think that it is also attributed to the fact that they have become more comfortable with the project itself.

Day Six Again 8 students early, however, my feelings about the today's activities are mixed. I think that they may hit the wall today. Group 2 NPP 3/4 of members were early. Group 1"Women in The Valley", also 3/4 are early. Group 2 NPP they are really coordinated. They are preparing and organizing for today's activity. They have already come in early and mapped out who does what for the task. The level 3 writing activity seems to suit this group most. I have discovered from the teacher and by observation that this group has two very high achievers and two who desire to please. The latter two have been in early everyday, and very polite towards the researcher and want to help me. There seems to be no stressing in this group only the mission in mind. As for Group 1 - they seem to need more prompting and encouragement. This group has two really hard and disciplined workers, the leader Amanda and the other Sabastian. These two keep things moving forward. The other two gentlemen mean well, but tend to drift off into personal conversational interests. This group had the most questions about the assignments. They needed clarification regarding what they needed to do. Group 2 works quietly and diligently, organizing and researching for their essays.
Tips:

- Prepare class for essay writing
- Add more hints to the research procedures, re: what to look for, where to go next and what to look for next.

Highlights:

- NPP works incredibly well together. There is different energy with this group.

Day Seven Today, an unusual beginning, there were only 3 students in early. This was not typical. I guess it was because they are growing tired of the assignments or they may be prepared for today's class because they had completed the homework assignment. One of the 3 who came in early is a member of Group 1 Women in the Valley; he came in fired up and ready. He fired off a question to me as soon as he came in to the lab. "I am having a problem finding lots of differences between the Franklin County women issues and the Augusta County women"? I said to him that despite the political and geographical differences between the two locations, maybe there is not too much difference in the sociological and cultural differences. I saw the light bulb come on! Then he began to run off a list of similarities between the two locations.
The students are all in their seats and off typing their individual essays into the wordprocessor and saving them in the archive folders. This was a very intensely quiet time; they were really focused and engaged. Most students are very good typists, they navigated between the browsers and through ClarisWorks filing and saving with ease. All but 5 students brought a completed written essay of at least 2 pages. My feeling for today is this activity was successful because of two things: (1.) The students had an assignment prepared and ready to work when they came into the lab. (2.) They have become familiar with the routine from navigation through the InfoTective site, the valley site, and journal entries. The were very excited about cutting and pasting together their final products instead of rewriting one complete essay.
Teacher repeats today's time schedule. He does a great job at keeping them on task and on schedule. He tells them to finish typing their individual essay and print out a copy for him. NPP moves on, they are rolling. This group has a very mature work ethic. The assumed the responsibility and divide up the work and move on. Teacher stops the class to touch base. "Move on everyone, you should be winding down, and getting ready to start your journals". " NPP" and "Women" groups are nearly finished with essays and half have started journals. One "NPP" member has moved on to begin reviewing the next days objectives, and he has found my personal web page! The class was very engaged in today's writing assignment I guess that this is not new for them. *Day Eight* 5 students leap into the classroom and screamed, "We have a short class today!" I asked them why, they said with smiles on their faces, "We have Club Day today"! Club Day is a period that occurs once a month, where students are given a choice of various extra-curricular activities to participate in. So, Unfortunately today's hour-long class is literally cut in half. The teacher enters the class and echoes the previous announcements, He says, "So, Guys you know what you have to do, Let's get going. We have

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

1/2 hour to get through most of level 4. If some of you have not finished your level 3 Journal entries then you will have until 1:00pm to finish". If your are ready to start Level 4 then you must go to the Valley of the Shadow and find 1 letter or diary excerpt to be used in your opening presentation statement - An excerpt that speaks with the voice of someone who represents your topic."

Tips:

- Preview Presentation checklist earlier in the sessions.
- Switch levels 4 with level 5
- This activity seems to really encourage students who don't like the traditional classroom techniques. If traditional is defined as writing, taking notes, listening and being engaged with that process vs. Technological techniques is defined as word-processing, surfing the web, detailing analysis from a web site and critiquing web based work.

Highlights:

- Despite the fact that we had a shortened class, they moved on well.
- The students did not waste time; they worked diligently, and were very engaged.

Day Nine Today the Level 4 presentation preparation should be completed and students will begin and some may finish Level 5. There were several questions about how to write an abstract. Despite the fact that I provided a brief explanation of an abstract for them along with instructions on where it fit within the final presentation, they seemed unnerved by this part of the activity. The abstract seems to confuse the students.

Group 1 "Women in the Valley"- This group had many questions about the abstract. They wanted to know what was an abstract, what to put into an abstract, and how long should it be. Group 1- Captain Amanda says, "I am writing the abstract, and you (Andrew), go back and look at the questions asked of our group and try to answer those." As for Group 2 "NPP" 2 of this group's members were blazing through the abstract activity, and the other 2 were glancing over the Level 4 journal questions. This group not only has a very mature approach towards learning they also seem to aggressively take on the tasks and want to complete each task with high honors. I have discovered that 1 of these students is AP, 2 are above average and 1 average. One of the students from the Antislavery Movement topic found a letter and said that she could not understand what it said. The teacher coached her on how to read it and what to look for.

Day Ten Wow, today was hectic. We started class in the traditional classroom. The teacher distributed the Level 5 worksheets, and gave students the option of going to the lab to finish the presentation preparation. Well, there were lots of questions about the Systems Chart. Group 1- these guys are tired, at least they looked tired. No enthusiasm for the activities today. Group 2- Usual- focused and ready to go, lots of academic stamina with this group. They had a couple of questions: Aylor-Group leader asked, " 1. How would we use this systems chart in our presentation? Can we use pictures and maps from the website for our presentation? Can you list on the board what we need for the presentation?" The teacher listed the presentation requirements on the chalkboard and explained each. Some of the students in the other groups are not engaged at all particularly the guys who are below average learners. Being back in the classroom allows them to drift back into the old habits. At least the computer seemed to place some responsibility in front of them, in other words with a computer in front of you and everyone working on something seems to force them to participate in this learning experience as well. I realize that a good lesson should do the same thing, however these guys were also little more intrigued by the idea of working on a computer.

One student politely suggested that his group would perform better if they had some choice in the group selection. He expressed that this would affect the group motivation and in fact he said, "that friends would have a similar motivational level". I trust this young man's opinion, he is the one with his own website development business.

Day Eleven Unbelievable! These students were ultra prepared! Wow I don't get it? Yesterday when class ended I was unsure about what would happen today and unsure about the effectiveness of what went on with the concept mapping activity. The teacher had drawn the matrix on the chalkboard and had printed out his list of questions for each group and was ready to go. He also had written the names of the groups onto small strips of paper and placed the strips into a student's hat. Class began with a small announcement of the drawing and all groups should be ready to go! Mr. Riddick reached into the hat and the first name chosen was A Nation Divided! Wow were they ready! The lights went out and the team captain turned on the overhead for the computer and revealed an excellent web page! What a way to start. Two of the students created the web page using Notepad. The work was all their own. All parts of the presentation were linked and anchored to the corresponding sections and each student took a turn at reading and explaining the significance of their section. The first section to be read was the excerpt. This group chose a letter from a soldier to his wife. Great choice. This letter describes life on the battlefield and day to day events in the camp. The team leader began with the reading and next a student who used the metaphor of a thread to explain how the Nation was dividing/unraveling. Each thread was described and connected to an unraveling/divisive event. The 1st thread was the political divisions between Lincoln and Davis, 2d thread was slavery issue the Union v. the Confederates, and the 3d thread not yet broken North v. South the UNION not yet broken! The second part of the presentation was an original drawing of the metaphor and the nation divided and a Map of the divided nation on the web page. (each person spoke the leader would click onto the corresponding link and display what was being said.)

The third part was the reading of the abstract. The student who read this did very well. He began with the brief summary and then elaborated on it using specific examples from the Franklin and Augusta Counties newspapers! He said, Despite the different political parties' function in the press they all presented articles on slavery, North v. South,

with a local point of view." He used quotes from the press to support his assertion, used article perspectives, and frequently referred to newspaper and letters in his statements.
The students were very confident. The fourth part was to address the questions from the discussion group. They answered the more reasonable questions and then began to answer the questions put to them by the teacher. As the teacher would ask a question the students in the class would fill in their matrix charts. This entire presentation took 15 minutes. The group answered to question #2-newspapers accounts differed! No significant difference in viewpoints. The reports on the candidates were similar. Q#3 Slavery not presented much in the articles that they read. There were more pre-election articles and therefore an emphasis on the election. Q#4 Benefits-Students cited 1st hand accounts, and papers revealed a clear expression of party message. The said that the part press affects the outlook, students answered both pros and cons of the press. The teacher closed with an elaboration of their answers and tied it in nicely to what they had been studying. Mr. Riddick emphasized the importance and uniqueness of Franklin and Augusta counties' perspectives. So many students were impressed with this presentation that they all began huddling immediately after the matrix was completed, before the next name was called.

References

Atwater, L. (1991). Trading places: Teaching with students in the center and professors on the periphery of the principles course. Teaching Sociology,19(4) 483-88.

Benenson, W. (1991). Creating and sustaining an interest in the news. Social Education, 55(7), 472-73.

Blake, D. W. (1981). Observing children learning history. The History Teacher, 14, 533-549.

Fontana, L. (1993). Multimedia: A gateway to higher-order thinking skills. Proceedings of selected research and development presentations at the convention of the Association of Educational Communications and Technology sponsored by the Research and Theory division. New Orleans, LA.

Downey, M. & Levstik, L. (1990). Teaching and learning history: The research base. Social Education, 52, 336-342.

Frederick,P. (1991). Active learning in history classes. Teaching History, 16(2), 67-83.

Gottesman, L.D. (1990). Newspaper literacy. Social Studies Review, 29(3), 29-36.

Hilligoss, T. (1992). Demystifying "classroom chemistry": The role of the interactive learning model. Teaching Sociology, 20(1), 12.

Junn, E.N. (1989). "Dear mom and dad": Using personal letters to enhance students' understanding of developmental issues. Teaching of Psychology, 16(3), 135-39.

Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985) Naturalistic inquiry. Beverly Hills, CA. Sage Publications

Merriam, S. B. (1998). Qualitative research and case study applications in education. (2nd ed.), San Francisco, CA.: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Virginia Center of Digital History. (1998). "The Valley of the Shadow Project" <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/vshadow2/>

Yin, R.K. (1984). Case study research, design and methods. Beverly Hills, CA.: Sage Publications.